

THE NEW WEAPON OF CHURCH DEFENCE AT PENARTH.

STORY OF A BALLAD.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir,—In view of the recent bitter attack made upon me at the Church Defence meeting at St. Augustine's Institute, Penarth, I beg to call attention to a simultaneous attempt made by well-known Churchmen to undermine my influence as a Christian minister by attributing to my satirical ballad on the Bishop of St. David's an obscene suggestion of the basest kind. It is necessary that I should at once state the circumstances in which that ballad (Welsh and English) was in the first place issued last year, and those in which, in self-defence, I now enclose it for republication in its English form, which is the form in which I am accused of having couched the vulgar and base suggestion.

For some years the Bishop of St. David's, in opposing the Welsh Disestablishment Bill, instead of confining himself to the discussion of the subject, persistently, and with increasing frequency, made very offensive allusions to Mr McKenna, as well as most undignified reflections upon that Cabinet Minister's qualifications for his task. This discreditable style of personal attack degenerated more and more as time advanced until at length it culminated in the Bishop applying to the Bill the vulgar epithets of "Tuppenny Bill," "Tuppenny go," etc. Strong and repeated protests against this unepiscopal style of oratory proved to be of no avail. Ultimately I wrote a ballad, in which I unsparingly satirised the Bishop's display. This, happily, had the immediate effect of making him drop his slang and speak in a style more worthy of his position. Thus, although the first issue of the ballad was soon exhausted, no re-issue of it was made or contemplated, as it had already effectively answered its purpose.

At the recent Church Defence meeting at Penarth, however, to which I have referred, the attack made upon me culminated in a dramatic display of a copy of my ballad, accompanied by such solemn and mysterious remarks about its contents as to suggest something unutterably shocking. Not a line, however, of the ballad was read. I was surprised at the tone adopted and the long faces drawn, and was totally ignorant of the sordid significance of it all until some days later I was told that the Rev. G. P. Turner, M.A. (the rector of Penarth), had repeatedly, and with pious horror, attributed to the ballad an obscene suggestion of which he spoke as being utterly unworthy of a Christian minister. I at once wrote Mr Turner asking him whether it was true he had made that statement. In replying he evaded the direct question, but referred to my verses as "unsavoury," and added: "The expression 'obscene suggestion' is not mine, but in my opinion it fits them." I have twice subsequently repeated the question, but he has on

each occasion avoided a direct reply, although he has each time endorsed the sentiment, and thus tacitly admitted the truth of the report. I have since then submitted the ballad to the judgment of others, but I have found no one who has not been shocked at the grossly vulgar and impure meaning read into it. I have, moreover, received a legal opinion, which states:—

"There is no obscenity in the verses, nor the slightest suggestion of obscenity. The obscenity is in the mind of anyone who endeavours to wrest the words from their plain and straightforward meaning."

But Mr Turner was not alone. I now find that other pure-minded Churchmen were equally shocked by the ballad, copies of which were as rare as the dodo. It was recalled that one prominent cleric had stated that the existence of the ballad was the one all-sufficient reason why a ticket had been refused me for the Bishop's meeting, and this fact, given by such a high authority on such matters, made it abundantly clear that the contents of the ballad must have been shocking.

Another gentleman, moreover, who had never hitherto specially distinguished himself as a protagonist of refinement of speech or of sentiment, had made it widely known that his soul had been stirred within him by the ballad, which he dare not show his own wife. Some felt it their duty to warn my own people, and to express surprise that such a number could be induced, Sunday by Sunday, to listen to a man of such unclean lips. Meanwhile, some of my own people became concerned, and wondered whether there really was something after all in my verses which could have a double meaning. Soon I received applications for the ballad from friends and opponents, but, unfortunately, I had but few copies, and knew not where to get more. At length a friend, to whom I had given the ballad, disclosed to me what had been said and done.

Since then information has come crowding in from every quarter, and new actors in the drama come almost daily to light, especially some of those who have felt an interest in the "Noncon. protest" who are not Non-conformists.

I need add no more for the present except, indeed, frankly to say that I have often fought and given and taken straight hits from the shoulder. I have also known something of keen satire and effective repartee, but these to my knowledge have never been given with malice, nor have they been supplemented by accusations in private of indecent suggestions. It has been (for the first time in the whole of my experience) reserved for the rector of Penarth and some others to attribute to my words behind my back a grossly impure and vulgar meaning

which those words are utterly incapable of bearing, and thus to deal a deadly blow which, if effective, would paralyse my ministry among the people of my charge and the whole town in which I live. These are the weapons used by those who dare not meet me in the open, and all in defence of "Mother Church!"

I ask of you, therefore, the favour of publishing my satirical ballad in full, so that fair-minded persons of all creeds and persuasions may be able to see where the obscenity lies (if such there be), whether in my verses or in the imagination of my traducers, who, as the last resort of a forlorn hope, have had recourse to this dastardly method of attack when every straightforward method has failed them.—I am, &c., DAVID DAVIES, Bronwydd, Penarth.

THE BISHOP OF ST. DAVID ON THE RAMPAGE.

(Welsh Air.—"Mae Robin yu Swil.")

Lo! "John of St. David" is on his campaign;
And Welsh Disestablishment now slings amain;
His crozier is high but his language is low,
As "tuppenny Bill" he slings out at the foe.

Chorus.—Oh, what a surprise!
That "John of St. David" should talk on that wise!

Now Jemmy the drover and Jack who mends shoes,
Indulge in strong words when they are "on the booze";

The "Rag and bone man," too, who shouts out
"Old clo'."

Whenever he tipples cries "tuppenny go"!

The first time I saw a Lord Bishop, I gazed
On his apron and gaiters, and stood quite amazed;
I asked what they were of a huckster—but, oh!
He answered, "They're only a tuppenny go"!

A young lad to Oxford is sent for a while,
To brush up his manners and perfect his style;
It seems that John went there and got on with ease,
Yet, horror! cries "tuppenny" like one of these.

He cries "Spoliation" and calls to the fray,
Then leaps till perchance his silk apron gives way;
When "McKenna" he shouts, gaiters burst with a bound,
And his arms like a windmill keep on whirling round

When shouti'g "Freak Theory" the welkin he rends,

And syntax ignores while his Church he defends,
O'er the "Mean little Bill" he blasphemes with a will,

But crowning the whole is his "tuppenny Bill"!

A bishop is high in vocation and place,
O'er hundreds of clergy of learning and grace,
To him they all look for refinement and skill;
But where's the refinement in "tuppenny Bill."

When once Disestablishment rules in the land,
And brings in its girdle true liberty's wand,
No Churchman in Wales, though men search vale and hill,

Will e'er call the Measure "a tuppenny Bill"!

*The signature of the bishop is "John St. David,"
—DAVID DAVIES.